

# On the Road to Abolition—Ending the British Slave Trade

2007 marks the 200th anniversary of the 1807 Parliamentary Act to abolish the British slave trade. Slavery itself was not abolished in the British colonies until 1834, with full emancipation following in 1838. Different manifestations of slavery developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and millions of people continue to be subjected to contemporary forms of slavery today.

## The Slave Trade

British involvement in the slave trade began in 1562 when John Hawkins, a British privateer, became the first known Englishman to capture and enslave African people and transport them across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. Many other European countries were engaged in similar activities but by the 1730s Britain had become the biggest slave-trading nation in the world and from 1690 to 1807 British ships transported about 3.25 million enslaved Africans.

The majority of Africans carried in British ships were destined for the West Indies and America. They formed an integral part of the lucrative economic network that has become known as the 'Triangular Trade'. British ships took guns, glass, metal, textiles and other British products to Africa where they were bartered for captive Africans who were then transported to the Americas. Here they laboured on plantations producing sugar, coffee, cotton and cocoa. These goods formed the cargo for the return journey to Britain. It was a massively profitable enterprise.

## Abolition

From the early years of the slave trade, great resistance was offered by the enslaved but few dissenting European or American voices were raised until the late eighteenth century. In Britain, objections to the trade emerged first amongst the Quakers and other non-conformist church groups. The *Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* was formed in 1787 and included the prominent campaigners Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp. The first Bill to abolish the slave trade was introduced to Parliament in 1791. Like many subsequent Bills it was rejected, facing fierce opposition from plantation owners, merchants, investors, industrialists and other people who had profited from slavery. But the Abolitionists skilfully mobilised public opinion, organising mass petitions and large-scale boycotts of sugar and other goods associated with the trade.

A vital component of the anti-slavery movement was the campaigning of former enslaved people living in Britain. Particularly significant were Ignatius Sancho, who denounced the trade in his *Letters*, and Olaudah Equiano and Ouobna Ottobah Cugoana, who both published books that documented in detail the violence and degradation inflicted upon Africans during transportation and on the plantations. Undermining the slave trade and slavery from within was the repeated resistance of the enslaved Africans themselves, in the form of uprisings, rebellions, escapes and non-cooperation.

## Aftermath

On 25th March 1807 the British Parliament finally passed an Act abolishing the transatlantic slave trade to the British colonies. This ended the legal transportation of Africans across the Atlantic on British ships, but it did not stop British investment in the slave trade or the building of slave ships in British dockyards. Nor did it stop other countries trading or end the institution or practice of slavery. Indeed a quarter of all Africans who were enslaved between 1500 and 1870 were transported across the Atlantic after 1807.

The impact and legacy of the slave trade is impossible to quantify. It led to unprecedented forms of cruelty and subjugation and the development of long-lasting forms of racism and inequality. Many commentators regard the forced removal of vast numbers of young Africans as having played a crucial role in limiting prosperity and industrial growth in parts of West Africa. The effects of this are still present today.

# Exhibitions & Events

All exhibitions are free. Full addresses and contact details can be found on the back of this leaflet.

## NATIONAL GALLERY

### *Scratch the Surface*

20 July–4 November, Room 1

*Scratch the Surface* brings together Zoffany's *Mrs Oswald* (1763–4) and Reynolds' *Colonel Tarleton* (1782) to explore the complex relationship between these sitters and slavery. Newly commissioned work by Yinka Shonibare MBE will also be on display in the spectacular Barry Rooms. A varied programme of events and activities will accompany this exhibition, including talks, tours, workshops and films. Visit [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk) for more details.

## NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

### *Portraits, People and the Abolition of the Slave Trade:*

*A Journey through the National Portrait Gallery Collection*

17 March–22 July, Main Galleries

A specially commissioned Trail that runs throughout the Gallery highlighting portraits of key individuals, ranging from Elizabeth I to William Wilberforce, who have been linked to the slave trade and its abolition. These portraits include individuals who invested in the trade, or who owned slaves and supported slavery, as well as images of slaves themselves and of people who were prominent in the movement to abolish the trade. The Trail ends with images and comments from people like Aidan McQuade, Director of Anti-Slavery International, who are fighting to stop slavery today. For information about the Gallery's programme of related talks, music, family activities and film see [www.npg.org.uk/abolition](http://www.npg.org.uk/abolition).

## HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

*The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament & People*

23 May–23 September, Westminster Hall

This exhibition tells the story of the pressures and events, at home and abroad, which influenced Parliament's abolition of the British slave trade in 1807. The Act itself is displayed along petitions sent to Parliament by the public and Thomas Clarkson's African Box which he used on his abolition tours along with other important exhibits which bring this remarkable story to life. Please check the website for opening times at [www.parliament.uk/slavetrade](http://www.parliament.uk/slavetrade).

## TATE BRITAIN

*1807: Blake, Slavery & the Radical Mind*

30 April–21 October, Room 8

A special display to mark the anniversary of the Parliamentary Act abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807. It focuses on William Blake (1752–1827) and the circle of radical writers and artists associated with the publisher Joseph Johnson (1738–1809) in the 1790s and 1800s. There will be a variety of events, including talks, performances and music for adults, families and young people and for schools. Please check the website for details at [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk).

## WESTMINSTER CITY ARCHIVES

*Westminster & the Transatlantic Slave Trade*

6 March–3 August, Westminster Archives Centre

5 September–31 October, Yaa Asantewaa Arts & Community Centre

The exhibition *Westminster and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* focuses on the impact of the slave trade at a local level, drawing on the Archives Centre's extensive archives and local studies collections. The exhibition also documents the lives of the African residents of Westminster during the age of the slave trade.

## WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

Westminster City Council is running events throughout 2007 that feature guided walks, exhibitions, talks, films and performances. Highlights of the programme include: guided heritage walks with historian Steve I Martin, exhibitions of images from the Royal Geographical Society in Paddington Library, Maida Vale Library and Westminster Reference Library, talks in these libraries by Cliff Pereira and Steve I Martin; film screenings (in partnership with 100 Black Men of London) in the National Portrait Gallery Ondaatje Lecture Theatre and the Odeon Leicester Square; and an exhibition and performance in the City of Westminster Archives Centre, see [www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition) for details.



WWW.WESTMINSTER.GOV.UK/ABOLITION  
DOWNLOADABLE AUDIO TOUR  
WEBSITE FOR ONLINE VERSION AND



Ending the British Slave Trade

to Abolition  
On the Road

A WALK AROUND WESTMINSTER



This map illustrates a walk around Westminster, from Trafalgar Square in the north to Pimlico in the south, highlighting events and individuals involved in the campaign to abolish the slave trade and slavery. Devised by the historian Steve Martin, it has been jointly produced by the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, Parliament, Tate Britain, Westminster City Archives, and Westminster City Council, all of whom are hosting exhibitions and programmes of events linked to the Bicentenary. The walk is not comprehensive and there are many places in other parts of London that are significant in the history of slavery. But it is intended as a starting point for anyone interested in exploring one of the most catastrophic events in modern British and world history.

You can start this walk at any point on the map; just follow the route marked in orange dots to explore some or all of the sites shown. Each site is marked with a number, identified around the map.

An expanded version of the map, containing additional information and images is available at [www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition). This also includes a sound version that can be downloaded onto MP3 players.

THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY



*The National Gallery*  
Trafalgar Square London WC2N 5DN  
Tel 020 7747 2885  
[www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)

*Houses of Parliament*  
London SW1  
Tel 020 7219 3000  
[www.parliament.uk/slavetrade](http://www.parliament.uk/slavetrade)

BRITAIN  
TATE

*Tate Britain*  
Millbank London SW1P 4RG  
Tel 020 7887 8888  
[www.tate.org.uk/britain](http://www.tate.org.uk/britain)

National  
Portrait  
Gallery

*National Portrait Gallery*  
St Martin's Place London WC2H 0HE  
Tel 020 7312 2463  
[www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

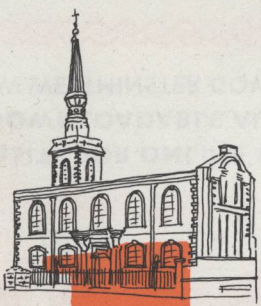


City of Westminster

*City of Westminster Archives Centre*  
10 St Ann's Street London SW1P 2DE  
Tel 020 7641 5180  
[www.westminster.gov.uk/archives](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/archives)

Exhibition also showing at:  
Yaa Asantewaa Arts & Community Centre  
1 Chippenham Mews London W9 2AN  
Tel 020 7286 1656  
[www.yaasantewaa.demon.co.uk](http://www.yaasantewaa.demon.co.uk)

For further information about events taking place in Westminster please visit [www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/abolition)



### ST JAMES'S PICCADILLY

This Christopher Wren church is one of a number of central London churches associated with the abolitionist writers Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana. Both were kidnapped from West Africa as young men and subsequently enslaved in the West Indies. They settled in London as free men and became the most prominent black figures in the anti-slavery movement as well as Britain's first black political leaders.



### SCHOMBERG HOUSE

80-82 Pall Mall was formerly the residence of the society painter Richard Cosway who employed Ottobah Cugoana as a manservant throughout the 1780s. During this period Cugoana learned to read and write and rapidly established himself as a spokesman for London's growing black community.



### THE NATIONAL GALLERY

See overleaf for details of special exhibition.



### NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

See overleaf for details of special exhibition.



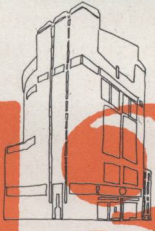
### TATE BRITAIN

See overleaf for details of special display.



### THE BUXTON MEMORIAL

The Buxton Memorial Fountain was constructed in 1865 in memory of the abolitionist MP Thomas Fowell Buxton, one of the founders of The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery. Its original location was in Parliament Square. It was erected in its current location in 1957.



### WESTMINSTER CITY ARCHIVES

See overleaf for details of special exhibition.



### ST MARGARET'S CHAPEL BROADWAY, CHRISTCHURCH GARDENS

In 1780 Ignatius Sancho died. His burial place was at St Margaret's Chapel, Broadway, Westminster. His son William transformed the grocer's into a printers and bookselling business and, in 1803, the fifth edition of THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS SANCHO rolled off his press.



### CAXTON HALL

Caxton Hall, formerly Westminster Town Hall, was the venue for the historic Pan African Conference of 1900. This was the first international effort to address the problems of African people worldwide. Nearly 40 attendees from all parts of the African diaspora were present. Also in attendance was the African-American writer W E B Dubois who delivered the address containing his prophetic words "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colour line".



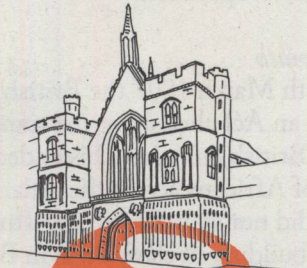
### WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Westminster Abbey contains memorials to William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. Sharp and Clarkson founded the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Memorials to Wilberforce and Clarkson can be found between the North Transept and the Nave of the Abbey. Granville Sharp's memorial is in Poet's Corner.



### ST MARGARET'S CHURCH

On 9th February 1759, Olaudah Equiano was baptised at St Margaret's. He was 14 years old. The baptismal record states that he was a 'native of the Carolinas'. St Margaret's was Ignatius Sancho's local church and where he had his wife, Anne, had their children, affectionately referred to as 'the Sanchoetta's' baptised.



### WESTMINSTER HALL & THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Dating back to the 11th century, Westminster Hall was where Lord Mansfield judged in 1772 in the case of James Somerset, an enslaved African who had runaway from his 'owner' in London, that no individual could be removed from this country to be used or sold as a 'slave' abroad. The passage through Parliament of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 were in a large part due to the leadership of the then MP for Hull, William Wilberforce. He died on 29th July, 1833. One month later, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act that gave all enslaved people in the British colonies their freedom. See overleaf for details of special exhibition.



### ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS

The church of St Martin-in-the-Fields is where William Cuffay, the elected president of London's Chartist and one of the five members of the Chartist National Executive Committee was married twice. Olaudah Equiano also worshipped here.



### NELSON'S COLUMN

A Black crewman holding a musket can be made out on the relief at the base of the south side of Nelson's column. This unidentified character could have been one of the nine West Indians who were listed on board Nelson's ship VICTORY at the battle of George Ryan, a 24 year-old ordinary seaman who was listed as an "African".



### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE & CHARLES STREET

A late 18th century visitor to [King] Charles Street would have noticed a grocery shop belonging to Ignatius Sancho, an African, at number 19 (where the entrance to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office now stands). Sancho, who had been brought to London as a very young child, was also an accomplished letter-writer, composer and wit. If you study the exterior of the Foreign Office as it faces Whitehall you will notice in one of the ground-floor roundels a relief portrait of William Wilberforce. Between the arches on the same level are depictions of the continents (with the exception of the Americas) in female form. 'Africa' is shown with a manacle attached to her wrist.